## **Amendments to the Claims:**

Claims 1-25, as originally filed, are reproduced as follows:

1	1. (original) A virtual backplane for an information network
2	interconnecting a plurality of computer elements comprising:
3	a plurality of physical backplanes, each backplane interconnecting a
4	plurality of cards, at least one card in each backplane interfacing at least one
5	computer element;
6	a data interconnect comprising at least one group, at least one card in
7	each backplane connected to at least one group;
8	at least one management processor supplying routing information to
9	the plurality of cards; and
10	a network interconnecting the at least one management processor and
11	the plurality of cards.
1	2. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 1 wherein at least one
2	card comprises a plurality of communication ports.
1	3. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 1 wherein the data
2	interconnect comprises at least one fiber channel.
1	4. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 1 wherein the data
2	interconnect comprises at least one ATM switch.
1	5. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 1 wherein the data
2	interconnect comprises Gigabit Ethernet.
1	6. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 1 wherein the
2	management processor provides at least one routing table to each card, each card
3	routing information to another card based on the routing table.

S/N: 09/688,784 Reply to Office Action of May 6, 2004

1 7. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 1 wherein the 2 management processor assigns a unique segment address to each backplane and to 3 each group. 1 8. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 7 wherein each card 2 generates at least one unique address based on a card number and the segment address 3 of the backplane containing the card. 1 9. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 1 wherein the 2 management processor automatically discovers to which cards each card is connected. 1 10. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 9 wherein the 2 management processor constructs a routing table for each card and sends the 3 constructed routing table to the card through the network. 1 11. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 1 wherein a routing 2 path is formed between a requesting computer element and a responding computer 3 element through a plurality of cards. 1 12. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 11 wherein each card 2 maintains at least one table of virtual connections, each entry in the virtual connection 3 table indicating a connection with another card. 1 13. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 1 wherein the cards 2 form a plurality of multipoint routing paths between a requesting computer element 3 and a plurality of responding computer elements. 1 14. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 13 wherein each 2 multipoint routing path between the requesting computer element and one responding

3	computer element is through a plurality of cards, each card in more than one
4	multipoint routing path at a point having the next card for at least one path different
5	than the next card of another path duplicating routed information for the at least one
6	path.
1	15. (original) A virtual backplane for an information network
2	interconnecting a plurality of computer elements comprising:
3	a plurality of physical backplanes, each backplane interconnecting a
4	plurality of cards, at least one card in each backplane interfacing at least one
5	computer element;
6	a data interconnect interconnecting at least one card in each backplane;
7	at least one management processor in communication with each data
8	card, the at least one management processor operative to
9	(a) generate a segment number for each backplane, the segment
10	number permitting each card to generate a unique address,
1	(b) send to each card the segment number of the backplane
12	holding the card,
3	(c) automatically generate a routing table for each card, the
4	routing table specifying at least one card to which information
5	is forwarded on route to any other card, and
.6	(d) send the routing table to each card.
1	16. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 15 wherein each card
2	runs at least one application for each computer element connected to the card, each
3	application assigned at least one address based on the card unique address, the
4	management processor further operative to forward the at least one address to at least
5	one additional card.

1	17. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 15 wherein the
2	management processor communicates with each data card through a communication
3	network separate from the data interconnect.
1	18. (original) A virtual backplane as in claim 15 further comprising
2	at least on group of cards interconnected by the data interconnect, the management
3	processor further operative to generate a segment number for each group.
1	19. (original) A method of communicating between cards, each card
2	associated with one of a plurality of backplanes, the method comprising:
3	interconnecting each backplane to at least one other backplane through
4	a data interconnect, each set of cards interconnected by the data interconnect forming
5	a group;
6	generating a unique segment address for each backplane and each
7	group; and
8 .	determining a routing table for each card based on at least one segment
9	to which the card is associated, each routing table specifying at least one next card
0	to route information for every other destination card.
1	20. (original) A method of communicating between cards as in claim
2	19 wherein an address for each card is determined based on the segment address for
3	the backplane with which the card is associated.
1	21. (original) A method of communicating between cards as in claim
2	19 wherein determining the routing table comprises:
3	determining the routing table for each card at a management processor
4	in communication with the card; and
5	distributing the routing table from the management processor to the
6	card.

I	22. (original) A method of communicating between cards, each card
2	associated with a backplane, at least one card in each backplane connected to a data
3	interconnect, the method comprising:
4	determining, in a management processor, a routing table for each card,
5	the routing table specifying to which card information is to be routed for each
6	destination card, the routing table determined based on the backplane to which each
7	card is associated;
8	distributing each card routing table to the card through a
9	communication network connecting each card with the management processor; and
10	routing information received by each card based on the card routing
11	table.
1	23. (original) A method of communicating between cards as in claim
2	22 wherein the data interconnect comprises at least one group, each group comprising
3	cards interconnected by the data interconnect, the method further comprising
4	assigning a unique segment address to each backplane and each group.
1	24. (original) A method of communicating between cards as in claim
2	22 wherein each card is assigned a unique address based on the segment address of
3	the backplane with which it is associated.
1	25. (original) A method of communicating between cards as in claim
2	22 wherein routing comprises point-to-multipoint information transfer.